

PREVIEW

MEGA DRIVE
PREVIEW



16 MEG

BY:
SEGA

RELEASE:
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Interesting fact, number one: there currently only two Virtua Racing Megadrive cartridges in the entire world. One of them was in the possession of Sega Europe, who only allowed journalists from SEGA MAGAZINE to get a look at it. To our knowledge, every other Virtua Racing pictures you've seen have been purloined from Japanese magazines. We've actually played it. Here's our report.

Virtua Racing was a milestone of an arcade machine - it combined super-smooth gameplay with the best polygon graphics ever seen in the arcades. Basically, it's an utterly astounding coin-op experience. Now, SEGA MAGAZINE is proud to officially unveil the Megadrive version, which promises to be as innovative and ground-breaking as the arcade original.

The game is the first title from Sega to make use of a specialised new microchip which enables the Megadrive to produce immensely detailed and animated polygon images - take a look at our exclusive screenshots to see just how amazing the graphics are. That being the case, you won't be surprised to discover that the game is being programmed by the very same team that created the arcade original.

At the moment, the game is a virtual copy of the coin-op - all of the tracks and difficulty levels are in there, as are all the different perspectives (the introduction screens even show off a few more!). The speed of the game easily equals the coin-op. In fact, it looks even faster to the casual observer.

However, gameplay is the all-important factor and we're happy to report that the Megadrive version of Virtua Racing is shaping up to be just as good as its coin-op parent. The update is very smooth and your virtual automobile responds like a dream.

The game is a mammoth 16-meg, with battery back-up to save off your best times. Sega really want to show off with this astounding new product on the innovative technology, so they've reserved a top-specification cartridge configuration for the game.

We've had hours of play on the game and reckon that it's shaping up to be one very hot title. We have the full review, totally exclusively, in issue three of SEGA MAGAZINE. ➔

VIRTA



▲ The introduction sequences of Virtua Racing show all manner of different viewpoints that are not present during the actual game.



▲ The "camera" pans around the action in the brilliant introduction sequence, really showing off what the Virtua Racing graphics engine is capable of producing.



▲ Should your car become damaged in some way, take a trip to the pits and get your car repaired! Check out the "virtual" men who replace your worn tyres with fresh ones!

VIRTA RACING



▲ A "miles away" aerial view of the EXPERT level course. This view enables you to fully appreciate the sheer processing power of the new Sega chip. The speed remains constant no matter how detailed it is.



▲ The MEDIUM level course is set partly in an industrial backdrop - check out that bridge, but mind the concrete walls! Those green polygons are flying patches of grass picked up from the surrounding greenery.



▲ A breathtaking aerial view of the high-speed action. This is the daunting EXPERT course, surrounded (for the most part) by towering cliffs.



▲ The in-car view puts you closest to the action. When you switch view, the action smoothly pans in on the new view - watching the camera "enter" your car is utterly brilliant.



▲ What these shots don't show is the sheer speed of Virtua Racing - the new chip displays polygons at astounding speeds.



▲ Wipe out! The amazing crash scenes of the original coin-op have made their way into the Megadrive version.



▲ The suspension bridge of the original coin-op makes its way into the Megadrive version of Virtua Racing.

SEGA VIRTUAL PROCESSING

The talking point of Virtua Racing is the amazing polygon graphic engine. The results are very close indeed to the original coin-op. Played on a large telly, Virtua Racing is simply stunning. The graphics are powered by an all-new microchip inside the cartridge.

Previously known as the DSP chip (DSP standing for digital signal processor), we can exclusively reveal that it is known inside Sega as the SVP - Sega Virtual Processor. Of course, Sega are used to pioneering new technology. The coin-op version of Virtua Racing had the greatest polygon graphics of its time. The new Sega coin-op, Virtua Fighters, features next generation hardware that takes the beat 'em up genre into a whole new dimension. We recommend that you take a look at the game when it hits the arcade near you.

But what of the Sega Virtual Processor? Is its future limited to Virtua Racing? Happily, the answer is a resounding no. Sega's European Product Director, Barry Jafrato told us that there are several SVP games in development, covering several different game genres. We'll be bringing you more precise details in an upcoming news piece.

The big question at the moment concerns the cost of SVP chip, and thus the retail price of products which incorporate it. Sega are trying their best to make the chip both highly powerful and very cheap. However, one idea that Sega are seriously considering means that you buy a special Sega Virtual Processing cartridge which contains the chip along with basic interfacing circuitry. The actual games would only have the actual game code on them. That way, you need only buy the processor once - you don't need to pay for it every time you buy a SVP game.

We'll bring you more news on the situation soon.



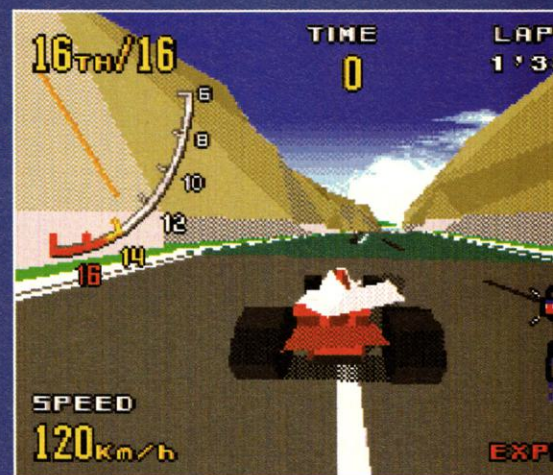
▲ An in-car view of the long tunnel on the MEDIUM level course. This view even shows you your "virtual" hands and steering wheel, which respond to the commands of your joystick.



▲ The attention to detail in Virtua Racing is simply breath-taking. Your wheels bring up some of the turf when you drive off the road. Note the steam on your burning rubber!



▲ The in-car view of the Virtua Racing action offers the player the most exhilarating ride. Since the view is so close to the road, the update is frighteningly fast. What's more, your view of what's ahead is limited somewhat, thus demanding high-speed reactions.



▲ View two, the "chase car" perspective depicts the action behind your virtual automobile. This view allows you to see more of what lies ahead and also lets you check out the any damage you've taken - quite a lot in this picture.

VIEW 1 VIEW 2



▲ You are free to drive wherever you want to with Virtua Racing. A lot of driving titles don't allow you to do silly things like reverse - one of Virtua Racing's best aspects is its sheer freedom.



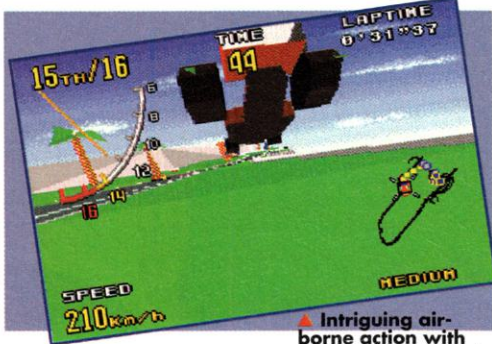
▲ The BEGINNER level of Virtua Racing isn't designed to be too taxing - even the bridge is rather wide, offering plenty of scope for some high-speed over-taking activities.



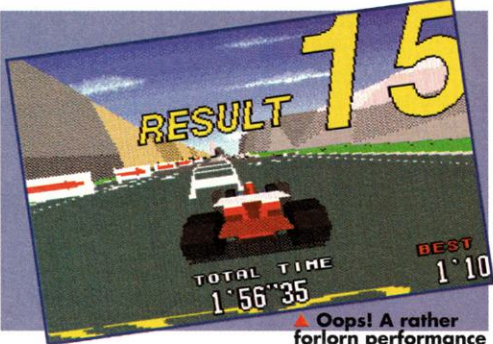
▲ The map in the corner of the screen also makes its way into the conversion - with just a simple look you're able to determine the position of every other car in the race.



▲ The fairground backdrop of the beginner level.



▲ Intriguing air-borne action with your virtual motor!



▲ Oops! A rather forlorn performance from "our man".



▲ The BEGINNER race offers you the chance to get to grips with your new car. There are a few sharp corners, but otherwise it's pretty simple.



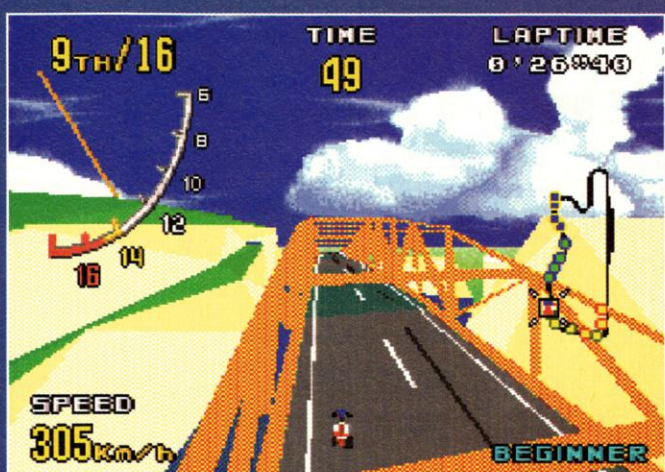
▲ Virtua Racing's course selection screen. Decide here which track you want to race on, as well choosing between automatic and manual gears.



▲ EXTEND TIME! Strict time limits are given for your racing. It's your job to reach a checkpoint before the time runs out.



▲ The third view shows the action from a perspective quite some way above and behind your automobile. Perhaps the most useful view available, this lets you see quite a way into the distance and shows any cars that are zooming up behind you.



▲ The most impressive view shows the action from quite some way above and behind the high-speed racing action. This view allows you to fully appreciate the virtual world that Sega has created for this game. It's particularly smart on the EXPERT course.

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